

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00  
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13 ACDA-07  
TRSE-00 OMB-01 SSM-03 /075 W  
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O 220845Z JUL 77  
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2456  
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 AMMAN 4099

E.O. 11652: ADS 1 AUG 1977  
TAGS: PBOR, PGOV, PLO, SY, XF  
SUBJECT: ASAD NEWSWEEK INTERVIEW

1. ARNAUD DE BORCHGRAVE HAS GIVEN EMBASSY TEXT OF ASAD INTERVIEW  
OF JULY 20, 1977. TEXT IS AS SENT TO DAMASCUS FOR CORRECTION  
AND APPROVAL BY SYRIAN PRESIDENCY. EXPECTS PUBLICATION NEWSWEEK  
AND PARIS HERTRIB SUNDAY JULY 24.

2. BEGIN TEXT

BORCHGRAVE -- WHAT IS YOUR REACTION TO THE BEGIN PEACE PLAN--  
A DEEP WITHDRAWAL IN SINAI, A MORE LIMITED ONE ON THE GOALN  
HEIGHTS, AND A SEMI-AUTONOMOUS WEST BANK LINKED TO JORDAN  
BUT WITH ISRAEL RESPONSIBLE FOR SECURITY?

PRESIDENT ASSAD -- IT'S A NON--STARTER AND DEFINITELY REJECTED  
BY US.

BORCHGRAVE -- FOR WHAT REASONS?

ASSAD -- BECAUSE SUCH A PLAN CANNOT BE DESCRIBED, BY THE  
REMOTEST STRETCH OF THE IMAGINATION, AS A PEACE PLAN. IT SIMPLY  
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AIMS AT GIVING LEGALITY TO WHAT WOULD REMAIN UNDER ISRAELI  
OCCUPATION AND BURYING THE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE.

BORCHGRAVE -- COULD IT PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR NEGOTIATIONS?

ASSAD -- IT CANNOT PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR ANYTHING AND BEGIN  
PRESENTED THIS PLAN KNOWING FULL WELL THAT IT COULDN'T.

BORCHGRAVE -- ON THE PROCEDURAL FRONT, BEGIN SUGGESTED THAT A GENEVA CONFERENCE BE FOLLOWED BY THREE OR FOUR COMMISSIONS ON THE KEY PROBLEMS OF SINAI WITH EGYPT, GOLAN WITH SYRIA, THE WEST BANK WITH JORDAN AND POSSIBLY ONE ON LEBANON, WITH CHAIRMANSHIPS ROTATING BETWEEN ISRAELIS AND ARABS. OR, ALTERNATIVELY, A RETURN TO CLOSE PROXIMITY TALKS WITH THE U.S. AS A GO BETWEEN. WHAT SEEMS REASONABLE?

ASSAD -- FROM OUR VIEWPOINT THERE IS ONLY ONE OPTION OPEN -- RECONVENING THE GENEVA CONVERENCE WHERE THE ELEMENTS OF PEACE WILL BE DISCUSSED, NAMELY THE WITHDRAWAL FROMNALL THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, A PALESTINIAN SOLUTION AND THE END OF THE STATE OF WAR. THESE ARE NOT SEPARATE PROBLEMS SO THERE IS NO NEED FOR SEPARATE COMMITTEES. IT IS A SIMPLE MATTER OF RESTORING PEACE TO THE REGION.

BORCHGRAVE -- PRESIDENT CARTER SAYS THE U.S. WILL BE AN HONEST INTERMEDIARY AND WON'T IMPOSE THE U.SM WILL ON ANYONE. CAN THIS LEAD TO PEACE?

ASSAD -- IF THERE IS A DESIRE FOR GENUINE PEACE AND A DETERMINATION TO PROVIDE THE PREREQUISITES FOR PEACE AND TO ACHIEVE IT, THEN ONE CAN BE HOPEFUL ABOUT THE HONEST INTERMEDIARY ROLE.IF THIS IS WHAT PRESIDENT CARTER MEANS AND IF HE TAKES A SINCERELY NEUTRAL STAND, NO DOUBT CONFIDENTIAL

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THIS WILL HELP TO MOVE TOWARD PEACE. ONCE ISRAEL REALIZES THAT THE U.S. WILL TAKE A NEUTRAL STAND, THEN ISRAEL WON'T THINK OF CONTINUING ITS OCCUPATION OF ARAB TERRITORIES.IT WILL BE OBLIGED TO MOVE QUICKLY TOWARD EVACUATION AND PEACE. SO IT ALL DEPENDS ON HOW THE U.S. CONCEIVES OF A NEUTRAL STAND. IT DOESNT MEAN THAT YOU SAY SOMETHING AND THE FORGET ABOUT IT.

BORCHGRAVE -- YOU TOLD ME ONCE THAT EVEN IF ISRAEL WAS WILLING TO RETURN ALL OF THE GOLAN HEIGHTS, YOU WOULDNT BE INTERESTED UNLESS IT WAS LINKED TO A PALESTINIAN SOLUTION. DO YOU STILL FEEL THE SAME WAY?

ASSAD -- ABSOLUTELY. THAT REMAINS OUR STAND. WE CAN NEVER GIVE UP PALESTINIAN RIGHTS, NOT FOR ANY PRICE. THEIR CAUSE IS OURS IN THE FULL SENSE OF THE WORD. GOLAN IS PERIPHERAL. SINAI, TOO, FOR THAT MATTER. THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IS THE GUT ISSUE.

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2457

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 AMMAN 4099

BORCHGRAVE -- BEGIN SAYS A PALESTINIAN STATE ON THE WEST BANK WOULD BE A "A MORTAL DANGER" TO ISRAEL AND THAT IT WOULD NEVER COME INTO BEING. PRESIDENTS CARTER AND GISCARD AND THE EIGHT OTHER COMMON MARKET NATIONS ARE TALKING OF A PALESTINIAN "HOMELAND" ON THE WEST BANK. ISNT THAT AN IMPORATNAT DISTINCTION?

ASSAD--ENTITY, STATE, HOMELAND AND SO FORTH ARE A MATTER OF SEMANTICS. THE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN THEIR OWN STATE WHOULD BE RECOGNIZED WITHOUT RESERVATIONS. ISRAEL HAS NO RIGHT TO SAY THAT IT SHOULD TAKE THIS OR THAT FORM. A PALESTINIAN STATE MUST BE ESTABLISHED RIGHT FROM THE START.

BORCHGRAVE -- COULDNT BEGIN'S IDEA OF A SEMI-AUTONOMOUS WEST BANK, WITH SECURITY LINKS TO ISRAEL AND ECONOMIC LINKS TO JORDAN, BECOME THE SUBJECT OF NEGOTIATIONS?

ASSAD -- THE FORM OF A LINK BETWEEN JORDAN AND A PALESTINIAN ENTITY DEPENDS ON THE WILL OF JORDAN AND THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE. IT DOES NOT CONCERN ISRAEL. SYRIAN WILL SUPPORT ANY AGREEMENT THEY REACH. SUCH AN ENTITY WILL ALSO HAVE TO BE EVACUATED BY ISRAELI OCCUPATION TROOPS.  
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BORCHGRAVE -- PRESIDENT SADAT WANTS A JORDANIAN-PALESTINIAN LINK DETERMINED IN ADVANCE. GISCARD SAYS IT CANNOT BE

IMPOSED IN ADVANCE BECAUSE IT COULD THEN BE DENOUNCED A FEW MONTHS LATER AND CAUSE A MAJOR CRISIS IN THE AREA. HE SAYS IT MUST BE A VIABLE, AUTONOMOUS ENTITY RIGHT FROM THE START WHICH COULD THEN DECIDE IF IT SO WISHES TO HAVE SPECIAL LINKS WITH JORDAN.

ASSAD -- THE FORM, THE SUSTANCE AND THE TIMING OF SUCH A LINK SHOULD BE DETERMINED BY JORDAN AND THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE -- THAT IS, IF THEY BOTH WANT A LINK BETWEEN THEIR TWO STATES.

BORCHGRAVE -- HOW ABOUT THE SYRIAN IDEA OF A FEDERATION BETWEEN SYRIA, JORDAN AND THE WEST BANK SIMILAR TO THE UNION OF ARAB EMIRATES WITH A ROTATING PRESIDENCY, A JOINT FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY AND AUTONOMY ON ALL OTHER MATTERS?

ASSAD -- I AM NOT AGAINST ANYTHING THAT REINFORCES ARAB UNITY.

BORCHGRAVE -- BOTH CARTER AND GISCARD SAY IT IS NOW INCUMBENT ON ISRAEL TO RETURN TO THE 1967 FRONTIERS, WITH A FEW MINOR CHANGES IN ISRAEL'S FAVOR, WHILE IT HAS BECOME INCUMBENT ON THE ARABS TO GIVE ISRAEL REAL PEACE -- OPEN BORDERS, FREE TRADE AND NORMAL RELATIONS. DOES THIS STRIKE YOU AS A REASONABLE QUID PRO QUO?

ASSAD -- WE DONT BELIEVE ISRAEL WANTS REAL PEACE AND IS TRYING TO DECIEVE AND MISLEAD OPINION, PARTICULARLY IN THE U.S., BY THROWING UP MORE OBSTACLES. STRIPPED OF DIPLOMATIC VERBIAGE, IT'S CLEAR THAT PEACE MEANS ENDING THE STATE OF BELLIGERENCY. WHEN THE ARABS AGREE TO END THIS STATE, THIS MEANS WE WILL AUTOMATICALLY HAVE PEACE IN THE AREA, POLITCALLY AND LEGALLY CONFIDENTIAL

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. BUT TO IMPOSE TRADE, TOURIST AND OTHER EXCHANGES -- SO MANY GIMMICS THAT ISRAEL IS USING TO DECIEVE THE WORLD -- IN RETURN FOR GIVING UP ONLY SOME OF THE OCCUPIED LAND AND RESTORING ONLY SOME OF THE PALESTINAIN RIGHTS, ASSUMING ANYTHING IS REGAINED AT ALL, WOULD MEAN THAT THE ARABS, BY THEIR OWN WILL, ARE APPROVING AND ACCEPTING A NEW FORM OF COLONIZATION WHICH WOULD BE WORSE THAN THE OCCUPATION OF OUR LAND BY ISRAEL. AND HERE LET ME ASK YOU WHETHER ANYBODY COULD IMPOSE ON THE U.S. OR FRANCE TRADE RLEATIONS WITH A THIRD PARTY? AND COULD SUCH RELATIONS BE CONSIDERE A SINE QUA NON FOR THE EXISTENCE OF PEACE BETWEEN TWO PARTIES?

BORCHGRAVE -- DO YOU FEEL THAT THE MAXIMUM MR CARTER HAS SUGGESTED IS STILL FAR REMOVED FROM THE MAXIMUM THE ARABS CAN CONCEDE?

ASSAD -- OF COURSE PRESIDENT CARTERS VIEWS AND ARAB VIEWS ON

THE MIDDLE EAST SOLUTION ARE NOT IDENTICAL. BUT OUR  
IMPRESSION -- AFTER MEETING WITH HIM IN GENEVA -- IS THAT  
HE SEEKS TO FIND A SOLUTION THAT WILL  
BE JUST. TO ACHIEVE THIS, HE IS ENDEAVORING TO HAVE  
A CLEAR VISION OF THE PROBLEM.

BORCHGRAVE -- IS THAT VISION NOW CLEAR IN YOUR JUDGMENT?

ASSAD -- I THINK THAT MORE CONTACTS, DISCUSSIONS AND ATTEMPTS  
TO KNOW THE REALITY OF THE SITUATION ARE NECESSARY  
TO FORM A CLEARER VISION THAN THE ONE HE HAS NOW. WHATS  
IMPORTANT IS THE DESIRE AND THE WILL TO HAVE A CORRECT  
VISION. I WOULD ALSO ADD THAT MR CARTER STRESSED TO ME THAT  
HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE SITUATION HAS BECOME MUCH CLEARER AS  
A RESULT OF HIS MEETINGS WITH ARAB LEADERS.

BORCHGRAVE -- MOHAMED HEIKAL (THE ARAB WORLD'S BEST KNOWN  
JOURNALIST) HAS WRITTEN A SERIES OF ARTICLES EXPLAINING HOW  
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EACH NEW US PRESIDENT STARTS OFF WITH GOOD INTENTIONS  
BASED ON THE NATIONAL INTEREST AS HE SEES IT -- AND  
THAT THE ISRAELI LOBBY, WORKING THROUGH CONGRESS AND OTHER  
INSTITUTIONS, ALWAYS COMES INTO PLAY TO MAKE SURE THAT  
THE ENDING DIFFERS FROM THE BEGINNING. DO YOU SHARE THIS  
PERCEPTION?

ASSAD -- IF THAT'S TRUE, THERE IS A SAYING THAT EACH RULE  
HAS AN EXCEPTION. PRESIDENT EISENHOWER WAS AN EXCEPTION.  
HOPEFULLY, PRESIDENT CARTER WILL BE, TOO. HE OWES IT TO  
HISTORY NOT TO SUCCUMB TO THE PRESSURES OF A MINORITY  
OF AMERICANS WHO ARE TRYING TO PREVENT REAL PEACE IN THE  
MIDDLE EAST.

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE IMMEDIATE 2458

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 AMMAN 4099

BORCHGRAVE -- PRESIDENT SADAT ONCE ASSURED THE OTHER TWO  
CONFRONTATION STATES THAT HE WOULD NOT AGREE TO SINAI TWO  
UNLESS IT WERE LINKED TO SIMILAR ISRAELI  
WITHDRAWALS ON GOLAN AND THE WEST BANK, BUT IN THE END  
HE WENT AHEAD WITH A SEPARATE AGREEMENT. ISNT  
SINAI THREE NOW LOOMING ON TE HORIZON?

ASSAD -- WE ONCE PASSED THROUGH A ROCKY STAGE WHEN COOPERATION  
FAILED. NOW WE ARE IN COMPLETE ACCORD AND REALTIONS ARE  
GOOD AND FRATERNAL AGAIN. WE ARE WORKING TOGETHER TO  
CONSOLIDATE AND REINFORCE OUR JOINT STRUGGLE FOR THE RESTITUTION  
OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. WE ARE ALSO IN COMPLETE  
AGREEMENT NOT TO GIVE UP A SINGLE INCH OF THE LANDS  
OCCUPIED IN 1967 OR ALLOW ANY DILUTION OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS.

BORCHGRAVE -- IN OTHER WORDS, NO SINAI THREE?

ASSAD -- I TOLD YOU THAT EVEN IF THE WHOLE OF GOLAN IS  
RETURNED IN A SEPARATE AGREEMENT, THE ANSWER IS "NOM"  
WE CANNOT ANSWER FOR EGYPT BUT WE VERY MUCH DOUBT  
WHETHER PRESIDENT SADAT WOULD ACCEPT A SEPARATE DEAL.  
ALL THE TALKS NOW TAKING PLACE AMONG ARAB LEADERS AND  
BETWEEN THE ARABS AND THE US AND OTHER POWERS REVOLVE  
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ROUND AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT. THERE WILL BE NO MORE  
INTERIM AGREEMENTS OR PARTIAL STEPS.

BORCHGRAVE -- MAN Y POLICY-MAKERS IN THE WESTERN WORLD ARE WORRIED  
ABOUT A PLO-RUN WEST BANK STATE AS THEY SAY IT COULD BE  
A DANGEROUS DESTABILIZING FACTOR IN THE MIDEAST?

ASSAD -- IT'S MY VIEW THAT A PALESTINIAN STATE WILL BE LIKE  
THE REST OF THE ARAB STATES. GIVE THE PALESTINIANS THEIR  
RIGHTS AND I GUARANTEE THAT THEY WILL ACT RESPONSIBLY.

BORCHGRAVE -- THAT'S RATHER VAGUE AND NOT VERY REASSURING.

ASSAD -- BECAUSE WE ARE TALKING ABOUT SOMETHING THAT IS  
PREMATURE ANYWAY. SUCH A STATE IS FAR FROM BEING ACHIEVED.  
BEGIN CONSIDERS THE WEST BANK LIBERATED ISRAELI LAND.

SO THE FIRST OBJECTIVE IS HOW TO GET BEGIN AND HIS SETTLERS  
OUT OF THE WEST BANK BEFORE CONSIDERING WHAT FORM THE  
PALESTINIAN STATE SHOULD TAKE. THE SUBSTANCE MUST COME

BORCHGRAVE -- SAUDI ARABIA HAS RULED OUT THE USE OF THE  
OIL WEAPON AND ANOTHER EMBARGO BECAUSE IT IS NOW SATISFIED  
THAT THE WESTERN POWERS ARE BACKING THE ARAB STAND ON THE  
1967 FRONTIERS AND A PALESTINIAN ENTITY ON THE WEST BANK.  
SO IF ISRAEL REFUSES TO RETURN THE WEST BANK, WON'T WE  
SEE NO-WAR-NO-PEACE CONTINUING FOR SEVERAL MORE YEARS?

ASSAD -- NO WAR NO PEACE MAY OR MAY NOT CONTINUE FOR SOME-  
TIME. BUT IN ANY EVENT, THE ARABS WILL NOT REMAIN SILENT  
A LONG TIME. SOONER OR LATER, THEY WILL ESCALATE BY ALL  
FORMS AND BY ALL MEANS AT THEIR DISPOSAL.

BORCHGRAVE -- AS AN AMATEUR GEOPOLITICIAN, I SEE EGYPT OUT OF THE  
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MILITARY EQUATION FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS AS IT CONVERTS  
FROM SOVIET TO WESTERN EQUIPMENT, SYRIAN PREOCCUPIED WITH  
LEBANON FOR ANOTHER YEAR OR TWO, AND JORDAN NOT STRONG ENOUGH  
TO ACT ON ITS OWN. AM I CORRECT IN ASSUMING THAT THE  
CONFRONTATION STATES DO NOT HAVE MILITARY CREDIBILITY  
VIS A VIS ISRAEL FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

ASSAD -- TO A CERTAIN EXTENT, THERE IS SOMETHING TO WHAT YOU SAY.  
THE CONFRONTATION STATES ARE INDEED BUSY WITH CERTAIN OTHER  
PROBLEMS. HOWEVER, IF ALL THE ROADS LEADING TO PEACE ARE BLOCKED,  
THE ARABS WILL HAVE TO REARRANGE THEIR AFFAIRS A WAY  
THAT CONFORMS WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE NEXT PHASE.

BORCHGRAVE -- HOW LONG DO YOU THINK YOUR ARMY WILL HAVE TO  
REMAIN IN LEBANON? WILL IT BE ANOTHER YEAR BEFORE THE  
LEBANESE ARMY CAN TAKE OVER?

ASSAD -- THINGS ARE GOING QUITE WELL NOW. THE SKIRMISHES  
YOU HAVE BEEN READING ABOUT IN THE SOUTH BETWEEN PALESTINIAN  
COMMANDOS AND CHRISTIAN MILITIAMEN ARE ON THEIR WAY TO  
A SOLUTION. WE ARE ENCOURAGING THE LEBANESE AND OFFERING  
ALL THAT WE CAN TO HELP THE LEBANESE BUILD UP THEIR OWN FORCE  
TO REPLACE THE SYRIAN ARMY. IT'S DIFFICULT TO FIX A PRECISE  
DEADLINE. ANOTHER YEAR MAY BE CLOSE TO THE MARK, BUT IT  
COULD BE LONGER.

END TEXT  
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## Message Attributes

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**Decaption Date:** 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Note:**  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** AS 19770801  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D770261-0173  
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**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
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**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/ddc4ea65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009